

Salesman of Polaris

William Francis Raborn Jr.

Special to The New York Times.

COCOA BEACH, Fla., March 27—On the wall outside the entrance to the Washington office of Rear Admiral William Francis Raborn Jr. is a framed Bill Mauldin cartoon. It shows an Air Force general, cigar ground in his jaw, fishing from a small boat. Leaping from the water, looking cockily at the general's hook is a large shark like fish representing the Navy's

Polaris-carrying submarine. The caption under the drawing reads: "Go Fly A Kite."

The cartoon is the admiral's answer to the Air Force campaign to gain operational control of the Polaris missile system, which is entering a critical series of tests. However, if he had been the artist the caption would have been a good deal saltier.

"Red" Raborn, proud father of the Polaris program, is not the sort to ignore attempts to tamper with or run down his beloved project. He will go through the motions of insisting that he does not care to debate with someone who knows no more about naval affairs than a Swiss guard.

Colorfully Texan in Speech

Then, the built-in laughter in his eyes dimmed for the moment and a gull-shaped crease forming on his ruddy forehead, he will take care of the opposition in words that are colorfully Texan in tone and content. But he does it without venom, with the self-assurance of a man who feels he is dealing from an unassailable position.

The admiral has headed the Polaris program since its inception in 1955, with a salesman's fervor.

The success of the program to date in meeting a drastically tight timetable indicates that the technician in the admiral is the equal of the salesman.

His enthusiasm and drive are reflected in his staff, which darts about the country to Polaris facilities from a headquarters in the Munitions Building along Washington's Constitution Avenue.

It is, as staffs go, a small, compact one. Associates insist that it is next to impossible to get Admiral Raborn to add an extra billet.

"I can get more work out of one over worked man than out of two under worked men," he says.



Proud father of the Polaris program. He's a 'Can-Do' Man

In Navy parlance, the admiral is known as a "can-do" man.

"People will suggest fifteen reasons why something cannot be done," one of his former assistants reports, "but he will have a 'gut' feeling that it can. So he does it."

Though born in Texas (June 8, 1905, in the town of

Decatur), Admiral Raborn grew up in Oklahoma. It was Oklahoma's Senator Elmer Thomas who got him his appointment to Annapolis.

Almost from the start, his naval career took an aeronautic turn—and almost came to a quick end.

He had his first ride at Anacostia while on Christmas leave during his plebe year.

The engine died on the way down, and the plane made a dead stick landing on the edge of the field.

"Red" Raborn was a lieutenant stationed on the other side of the island from Pearl Harbor just before the Japanese attack.

A Knack for Anticipating

Exhibiting his talent for anticipating technical requirements, he had worried about the lack of anti-submarine equipment on the patrol planes in his squadron. He devised a rack for depth charges. The planes had them aboard when war came.

He was executive officer of the carrier Hancock during the Iwo Jima, Okinawa and several other operations. He was a Navy Staff Officer in the Navy when the Hancock was hit by a bomb.

Since the Raborn has alternated between sea duty and research and development.

The admiral has a son and daughter, both married, by his first wife. He lives with his second wife, the former Mildred Terrill (she was a Navy nurse with the rank of commander) in a split-level home in Arlington, Va.

He used to be a heavy golfer but gave it up for the Polaris. He has also taken up the organ. But his main hobby is gardening.

"There's always time to pull a weed or two," the admiral says.

FOIAb3b

CPYRGHT

CPYRGHT

CPYRGHT